

Motivational and expressive techniques as a resource for foreign language learning

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1. DRAMA WITH CHILDREN

Since a child is born he starts playing. From 0 to 2 years the child participates in pre-play exploration through senses and body: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. A child explores everything by putting it in its mouth.

From 2 to 4 years old, symbolic game begins. The child learns that toys and objects are replicate things in the real world, such as cars, planes...

At the age of 4 children start to pretend to be someone else, through play with others. Children role play and adapt their play to be understood by other children.

As we have seen, role play is an activity close to children experiences. This is another reason why we have to introduce drama activities in our classrooms.

2. BENEFITS OF DRAMA

Before starting with the benefits I want to differentiate between two terms:

- Drama- it refers to the process.
- Theatre- it refers to the production.

For the classroom application, I will focus on the process of learning through drama.

Drama activities develop early literacy in children because learners are involved in reading and writing, as a meaningful communication process.

A linguistic benefit of drama is that it develops student's narrative and discursive competence. Children who play stories are better at connecting and integrating events to storytelling as well as they show an early curiosity about literature.

It also promotes vocabulary development and pronunciation is also improved developing features of the language.

Dramatic activities present a fun, interactive and engaging way to work on communicative skills.

3. DRAMA TASKS

Now I am going to explain some drama techniques to use in our English classes. –they will be quite useful in our classes, as all of them help children express themselves, increase their curiosity and interests, develop meaningful strategies and a positive atmosphere in the classroom.

A) Drama games and jokes:

These techniques bring fun to the class. They are short tasks that can be used as an introduction, as a break or at the end of the lesson.

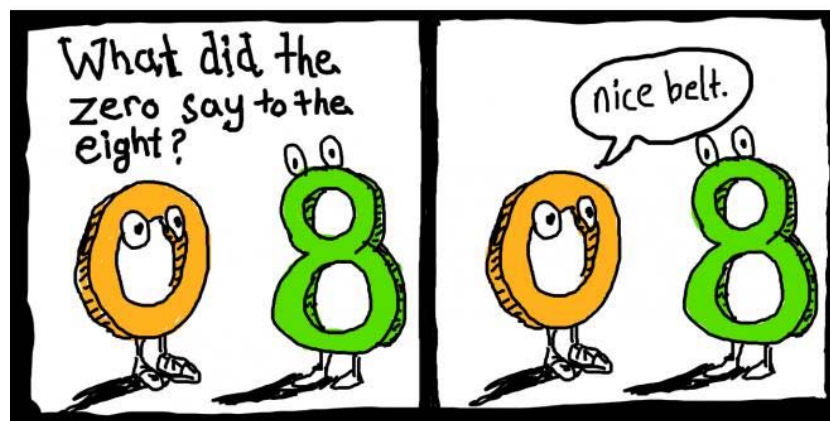
A drama game is an activity with rules, a goal and an element of fun. Its main objective is to develop communicative skills. An example is “Simon says”.

Jokes are short and bring fun and motivation to the class. Humour can help in the learning process lowering Krashen’s affective filter, reducing anxiety in the class, creating a comfortable atmosphere and encouraging students to take part in the class.

However humour is something which is not always transferable to another country, due to the cultural differences.

We have to follow a process when working with jokes:

- Select a series of jokes from different sources.
- Print copies and cut the papers in stripes, each one contain a joke.
- Then one student takes the paper, read it and then tell it to another student.



<https://www.onehourtranslation.com/translation/blog/learn-english-jokes>

B) Simulations and role-playing

In simulations, students are asked to be themselves in an imaginary situation.

The situations might be similar to the student's life and interests.

For example: you are in England and you have to ask for a direction to meet your friend.

A role-play involves acting. Students take roles and pretend they are someone else in a particular situation.

The teacher must describe the roles, contextualize the situation, present the linguistic options and provide students with a demonstration.

For example: one student pretend to be a pop-star and another student is a journalist.

Simulations and role-plays are valuable for second language teaching, they provide students with opportunities for meaningful learning, they develop and practice new language and they develop children's creative skills.

C) Other dramatic techniques.

- Miming games like “Statues” help learner become aware of their non-verbal communicative possibilities using their bodies or gestures to express meaning.
- Acting out stories involves interpreting the text of a story in the form of a speech. This activity helps children to understand the story.
- Play reading helps to improve pronunciation in learners. A starting point for using drama for pronunciation practice in play reading.

4. RULES SETTING LANGUAGE CONTEXT

We should take into account for drama tasks rules of setting language context. How to set the language context correctly and flexibly.

- Language context must be real. To practice everyday situations.
- Language context must be relevant. Situations to talk about must be in accordance with student's age.
- Language context must be definite. Students must know their roles in the drama.
- The language context must be helpful in developing the student's creativity.